



Winter 2016

GIPSA *news*

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GRAIN INSPECTION, PACKERS AND STOCKYARDS ADMINISTRATION EMPLOYEES

Time for Change and Celebration in 2016

Mentoring the Next Leadership Takes Collective Effort

By Larry Mitchell



INSIDE THIS

ISSUE:

- ◆ *Staff Recognition*
- ◆ *NGC News*
- ◆ *Training*
- ◆ *Enrollment Coverage*
- ◆ *Tax Season*
- ◆ *African American History Month*

WASHINGTON—Some folks have a genius for creativity all by themselves. In the business world it requires a combination of sound leadership, solid values, and transparent communications spanning across the corporate horizon. Harnessing creative sparks in a vast organization as geographically dispersed as the Grain Inspection Packers and Stockyard Administration (GIPSA) requires collaborative effort on a grand scale. It's not an easy accomplishment. Team work gets the job done and leads to innovation. Building effective teams is a commitment in which we all become stakeholders.

The recent snows that shut down Washington afforded me an opportunity to reflect on the future as much as the collection of talent responsible for guiding our efforts in the past. This new year will bring significant change for USDA as well as GIPSA. It's the cycle of civil service and the inevitable change that comes with age. I became even more aware of this inevitable as I reviewed our agency's soon-to-be released, five-year strategic plan.

Many of those who entered the organization early on have recently retired. Exemplary staff members like John Pitchford, Jody Boydston-Johnson, Kerry Petit, Dave Grady, and Bob Lijewski were noteworthy contributors who collectively dedicated substantial portions of their lives on behalf of farmers and ranchers across the country. Their myriad of achievements sustained integrity in daily operations and strengthened our organization for years to come. It's now time to recruit the next generation of front-runners and mentor their talent. That's a responsibility that falls throughout every GIPSA office across the nation as much as a legacy of effective leadership.

Continued on page 2

Time for Change and Celebration in 2016 (continued)

Mentoring the Next Leadership Takes Collective Effort

The pursuit of excellence in any corporate environment requires thoughtful planning for the future. It starts with the notion that nurturing talent and spotting creativity will inevitably lead to success. As leaders in the Federal Grain Inspection Service or the Packers and Stockyards Program, our combined focus involves grooming GIPSA's next generation. That includes adapting socially, technologically, and accepting that our efforts more often must be routed for the common good. That is a function of true leadership and the mark of professionalism among the corps of career civil servants.

The same dedication and selfless service that drives our passion to promote fairness and honesty in grain and livestock markets for our nation must be channeled to organizational growth by preparing talent that will replace each one of us. In a fast-paced, complex world requiring solutions beyond a single architect, we cannot afford to remain idle as pools of institutional knowledge diminish by retirement, or attrition in cases where honest communication and transparent collaboration are less than finely honed.

How else can we maintain the *gold standard* we often refer to in GIPSA's Federal Grain Inspection Service, than by thinking beyond our current success and focusing on those subsequently tasked to uphold it? The expectation can be daunting. Even so, I challenge our directors, senior managers, and field staff across the enterprise to embrace the expectation that teamwork is essential and adopt a new tradition that fosters an environment for leadership development and innovation.

The next five years bear historic significance for our proud organization. Starting this Summer GIPSA will celebrate the centennial of the U.S. Grain Standards Act signed into law by President Woodrow Wilson on August 11, 1916. The Packers and Stockyards Act, initiated by President Woodrow Wilson and enacted by President Harding, will also mark 100 years in 2021. The Agricultural Marketing Act enacted on August 14, 1946 by President Harry Truman turns 70 this year. The Federal Grain Inspection Service also approaches 40 distinguished years as a result of President Gerald Ford's approval on October 21, 1976. We owe GIPSA's legacy of excellence to the efforts of those who preceded us as much as those who currently sustain us. As we look to the future, it is important to reflect on the accomplishments of previous generations of enlightened leaders that laid the groundwork for our organization's success. We are bound by trust to uphold the highest standards of our predecessors and ensure that our successors continue the tradition of agricultural prosperity for America. Nothing less will do.



GIPSA Idea Hotline

GIPSA Idea Hotline is open for business.
Please send your suggestions or ideas to
GIPSA-Ideas@usda.gov; fax them to 202-690-2173; or
telephone them to 1-800-455-3447 or 202-720-7045.

It is best to send them via fax or email to reduce the possibility of transcription errors;





Employees in the News

Celebrating 50 Years of Service at GIPSA Headquarters



WASHINGTON—Administrator Larry Mitchell presented length of service awards to staff members at GIPSA headquarters recently. Pictured from left to right are Ms. Ana Alvarado, 15 years; Mr. Mark Kemp, 15 years; Ms. Tyhisa Luckey, 10 years; and Ms. Candace Hildreth, 10 years. (USDA Photo)

2016 Bids Farewell to Retiring Employees, Hello to Newly-Hired Staff

WASHINGTON— Mr. Bobby Webb Agricultural Commodity Grader retired January 9 after 37 years of service with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Mr. Webb began his career as an Agriculture Commodity Grader at the New Orleans Field Office in January 1976. He graduated from Alcorn State University Lorman, Mississippi in 1974. Mr. Webb first retired in April 2008 and also worked for Gulf County Grain Inspection Service in Saginaw, Texas. He returned to the Federal Grain Inspection Service in 2011. “I plan to attend all of Alcorn State University football games and do some travelling,” he said.

Ms. Aline Assad joined GIPSA’s Management and Budget Services January 11 as a Training Specialist. Ms. Assad previously worked with USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. In her new role, she will provide technical assistance and administer the AgLearn system, including serving as the first point of contact for all questions and issues related to completion of training courses. Ms. Assad will also assist in preparing and developing webinars, prioritizing training and development programs, and evaluating training program offerings.

National Grain Center News

Roundups from the Technology and Science Division



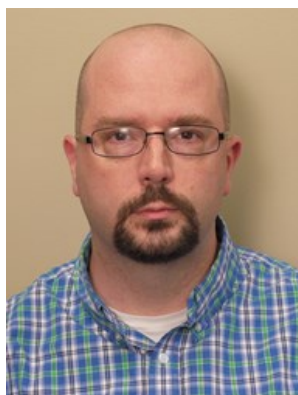
Mr. David Bright

KANSAS CITY, Mo.—Mr. David Bright was selected for a chemist position in the Analytical Chemistry Branch and will be performing the Varietal ID method as well as assisting with the Falling Number Monitoring and Check Sample Programs. He was with the Nebraska Department of Agriculture Laboratory for four years serving as the Quality Manager for the Residue Laboratory where his duties were to develop and im-

plement an ISO/IEC 17025 accredited quality management system. Before moving to Nebraska, Mr. Bright worked four years as a weapons inspector and analytical chemist for the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and is a co-recipient of the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize. He spent five years as a lead analyst at a chemical weapons destruction facility on Johnston Island and four years as a chemist/test engineer with the Department of the Navy in Florida. Mr. Bright holds a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry from New Mexico Tech and is currently working towards a master's degree through the University of Florida. While in Nebraska, Mr. Bright worked with the USDA-ARS studying antibiotic resistance in cattle feedlots as part of his thesis project.

KANSAS CITY, Mo.—FGIS recognized members of the *FMD Building Beyond* class of 2015 at the National Grain Center January 28. The ceremony recognized achievements in grading during their first six months of employment.

Class members started with FGIS in July. They include Shawn Wah Lee, Joshua Diaz-Lopez, Justin Johnson, and Emill Chineaperez. Members are currently being reassigned to field offices in Stuttgart, Arkansas Lake Charles, and Crowley, Louisiana.



Mr. Greg Zieber

KANSAS CITY, Mo.—Mr. Greg Zieber has been selected to fill the position as the DIOO QAS Manager. Mr. Zieber is an FGIS 2013 Leadership Develop Program graduate. He brings agency experience in sampling, grading, equipment testing, weighing, and mycotoxin testing. Mr. Zieber has been at Kansas City with the GSL (now DIOO) since moving from the Toledo Field office

in 2013. He has experience with ten grains and the pulses. As the DIOO QAS Manager, Mr. Zieber has responsibility for managing the QAS Operations of the field office.



KANSAS CITY, Mo.—The Board of Appeals and Review (BAR) periodically provides a comprehensive overview of the Quality Assurance Specialist's role in ensuring alignment with the BAR on sensory grading factors. Mr. Fred Felix (**pictured above, left**) coordinates the week-long training sessions for field office staff as well as official service providers

**Stories and photos by the NGC Report Team:
Mr. Roger Friedrich, Ms. Ruth Goff, Ms. Jennifer Helber**

National Grain Center News

TSD Employees Skip Holiday Parties and Get Down to Business



Mr. Glenn Terrill, Ms. Brenda Evans, and Mr. Jason Vanfossan display their certificates of recognition for outstanding customer service (USDA Photo)

KANSAS CITY, Mo.—Even that most miserly merchant of grain, Ebenezer Scrooge closed shop on Christmas eve, but some dedicated staff at the Technology and Science Division (TSD) just don't know when to quit. TSD recognized three employees as the *Cream of the Crop* at a recent division-wide staff meeting for dedication beyond the call of duty. Ms. Brenda Evans and Mr. Glenn Terrill, physical science technicians with the Biotechnology and Analytical Services Branch along with their supervisor, Mr. Jason Vanfossan, recently received commendation for superb customer service during the holiday weeks in December 2015.

Ms. Evans and Mr. Terrill were instrumental in processing a Federal Grain Inspection Service (FGIS) appeal for canola oil received December 24th at the National Grain Center (NGC). Although FGIS had the option to begin processing the appeal on Monday, December 28, Ms. Evans and Mr. Terrill volunteered to stay into the Christmas Eve holiday to avoid losing three processing days and provide the applicant with the results as soon as possible.

Fast forward to the following week, and Ms. Evans and Mr. Terrill seemed to encounter a second apparition from Christmas past as they again worked through another holiday eve to expedite results to customers in the most efficient manner.

This time they skipped the New Year's Eve festivities while Mr. Vanfossan rearranged his personal schedule to ensure that his staff had the support they needed to service the clients.

The *Cream of the Crop* program was established following recommendations from the National Grain Center's Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey's *Realtalk* listening and feedback sessions and recognizes notable accomplishments by NGC employees. The commitment demonstrated by Ms. Evans, Mr. Terrill, and Mr. Vanfossan to ensure that FGIS provides a *gold standard* of service to the grain handling industry certainly makes them the Cream of the Crop—and that's no humbug. Beat that, Mr. Scrooge.

GIPSA's Stuttgart Field Office Welcomes New Quality Assurance Specialist

STUTTGART, Ark.—The staff at GIPSA's field office in Stuttgart, Arkansas will soon expand, according to Ms. Sandra Methaney, field office manager. “Mr. Marc Marullo will join the staff February 7 as the Quality Assurance Specialist/Program Coordinator at the West Sacramento duty point providing grading supervision for rice, the U.S. Grain Standards Act, as well as Agricultural Marketing Act policy and procedural support,” she said.

Mr. Marullo began his federal career in 2007 as an intermittent Agricultural Commodity Technician in New Orleans. In 2009 he accepted a tour in the Destrehan area and became a journeyman technician. He was selected to participate in the initial *Building Beyond* Federal Career Internship Program in 2010. After completing the program and becoming an Agricultural Commodity Grader in 2012, he transferred to Crowley, Louisiana working in rice mills and learning to grade rice. Mr. Marullo served as the Supervisory Agricultural Commodity Grader/Officer in Charge at Brunswick, Georgia for the past two years and is a 2006 graduate of South-eastern Louisiana University.



News You Can Use

Training, Employee Benefits, Tax Season

Limited Enrollment Period Permits Changes in Health Care Coverage

MINNEAPOLIS— The Office of Personnel Management will allow an additional limited enrollment period for employees to elect *Self Plus One* between February 1 and February 29.



The limited enrollment period permits individuals who missed open season to change their enrollment from *Self and Family* to *Self Plus One*.

The following conditions apply to changes made during the limited enrollment opportunity for employees enrolled in *Self and Family*:

Only those who participate in premium conversion will be allowed to decrease enrollment to *Self Plus One* using the Limited Enrollment Qualifying Life Event (QLE) Code 1Z.

Decreases in enrollment to *Self Plus One* will be the only allowed enrollment changes.

No changes in plans, no option changes, no increase or other decreases in enrollment is permitted.

All enrollment changes will be prospective to the first day of the first pay period following the one in which the change is requested.

Employees should either sign-up using NFC's Employee Personnel Page (EPP) or by completing an SF-2809 Health Benefits Election Form and faxing it to the Benefits office at (612) 336-3545 during the limited enrollment period.

These restrictions only apply during the limited enrollment QLE, 1Z. Employees can make changes to their health insurance using other valid QLE codes found on the SF-2809. Contact your Benefits Specialist with additional questions.

Online Mentoring Really Matters *OPM Webcast Set for February 23*

WASHINGTON— The Office of Personnel Management (OPM), Learning and Development program office is hosting a mentoring webcast, *Why Mentoring Matters*, Tuesday, February 23 from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m. EST.

Guest speaker is Ms. Christina Goldfuss, Managing Director at the White House Council on Environmental Quality.

Federal employees wishing to attend this webcast in person at OPM must register on Eventbrite using the following link.

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/why-mentoring-matters-with-white-house-guest-speaker-ms-christina-goldfuss-tickets-21096060886>

No registration is necessary for the virtual webcast. Simply follow the link to the OPM webcast:

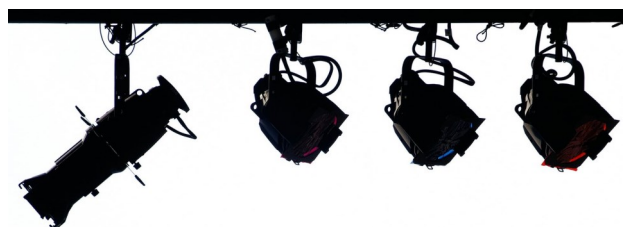
<http://web.2.c3.audiovideoweb.com/ca25web26002/7c3flslive1573.html>

Viewers may watch the webcast on a PC or MAC computer. Click on the link to open up your default browser (i.e. Chrome, Firefox, Internet Explorer, or Safari).

You can also watch the webcast stream on an iPhone, iPad, or Android smartphone/tablet. The device should be Wi-Fi or 4G capable.

If you telework, just click in or cut and paste the following link into your favorite browser:

<https://recapd.com/w-5cea47>



News You Can Use

Tax Season Arrives (And Maybe An Early Spring)

IRS Extends Tax Filing Deadline

NEW ORLEANS—National Finance Center officials remind us that Mardi Gras is just around the corner, but so is the Internal Revenue Service now that tax season is in full swing. The IRS began accepting electronically filed tax returns January 19 and this year extended the final deadline for filing federal income taxes to Monday, April 18.

Why not get a head start on federal and state income taxes by downloading your W-2 electronically in MyEPP?

If you're looking for the most up-to-date tax formula for your area, visit the National Finance Center's Tax Map and select your state to view how taxes are withheld from your payroll.



GIPSA Exceeds CFC Goal by 153%

WASHINGTON—Mr. Gilbert Sanchez, chairman of GIPSA's 2015 Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) reports that GIPSA received \$15,689 in pledges and also exceeded its 2015 agency goal by 153.7 percent.

"Congratulations, and thanks for supporting CFC and getting GIPSA and the Department of Agriculture successfully to this point in its 2015 CFC goal!" said Mr. Sanchez.

Overall, USDA employees contributed more than \$1.4 million to CFC in 2015.



IRS Requires Filing Form 1095-C

Minneapolis—The National Finance Center announced it will mail all USDA employees the Employer-Provided Health Insurance Offer and Coverage, 1095-C form in addition to the 2015 W-2 Wage and Tax Statement. The form certifies when an employee was offered health insurance, who was covered, and the lowest cost option for Federal Employee Health Benefit (FEHB) coverage for 2015, in accordance with the Affordable Care Act.

If an employee was eligible for health coverage through a FEHB plan and declined to enroll, but then purchased health insurance coverage through the health insurance marketplace and now wishes to claim the premium tax credit for the marketplace purchase, the information on the 1095-C form will assist the employee to determine whether eligibility to claim the tax credit.

For additional information about the premium tax credit, reference IRS Pub. 974 Premium Tax Credit (PTC) <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p974.pdf>.

This form is not applicable to employees who have not purchased health insurance through the health insurance marketplace. For additional information about the 1095-C form reference: <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f1095c.pdf>.

No Shadow Says Famous Fur Caster

WASHINGTON—Despite the recent blizzard that shut-down GIPSA Headquarters recently, temperatures in the nation's capital reached a mild 50 degrees on February 2 under bright skies.

In Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania meanwhile, Phil the famous forecaster presumably failed to spot his shadow. USDA would not confirm if that will signal an early spring, or any connection to climate change. No groundhogs were seen in the vicinity of USDA, but the squirrels at the National Mall were certainly busy panhandling as usual from unsuspecting tourists.



National African American History Month 2016

A Testament to Generations of Courageous Individuals in the Face of Uncomfortable Truths

